

HEALTH

Exercising for Bone Health

Bone health follows the old adage "Use it or lose it." Stressing bones through activity and exercise increases calcium content and encourages the production of stronger and denser bones. A sedentary lifestyle has the opposite effect on bones. Inactivity causes bones to lose calcium and get weaker.

Any exercise is good because all exercise causes the muscles to contract against the bones, which stresses and stimulates them. Weight bearing exercises are the best because both muscle and gravity cause stress on bones. Examples of weight bearing exercises include walking, hiking, household chores, yard work, downhill skiing, skating and weight training.

Other Factors Necessary to Maintain Good Bone Health

1. Increase calcium intake

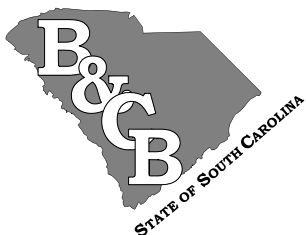
To be strong, bones also need calcium. Increased calcium produces increased bone density which increases strength. Sources of calcium include dairy products, green leafy vegetables, tofu, shellfish and sardines.

2. Estrogen's role in bone formation

In women, estrogen helps calcium become absorbed into the bones. After menopause, as estrogen levels lower, calcium losses can increase dramatically and calcium supplements should be considered.

3. Is too much exercise harmful?

Yes. Young, highly competitive athletes are tempted to overexercise by doing too much too fast and not giving their bones enough time to rest. It is important to start exercising gradually and slowly increase the time and intensity of the workout.



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